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FOR NEA/ARP, TFLE01, AND DS FOR DS/ITA, DS/CC, DS/IP/NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2016

TAGS: PREL ASEC PHUM KU

SUBJECT: TFLE01: 200 PROTEST OUTSIDE OF EMBASSY IN SUPPORT
OF NASRALLAH

Classified By: CDA Matthew H. Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) The General Union of Students and Trainees of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training organized a July 15 demonstration in front of the embassy to protest the U.S. veto of the Qatar-proposed UNSC resolution condemning Israeli military actions in Gaza. Billed as a peaceful sit-in and advertised in local Arabic papers, the 6:00 PM (local) protest attracted a co-ed crowd of 200 who carried pictures of Hassan Nasrallah, chanted pro-Hizballah slogans and "Death to Israel," and burned the American flag. In addition to the student protesters were some elected officials including Municipal Council member Dr. Fadhel Safar who used the protest to denounce the continued detention of Kuwaiti citizens at Guantanamo and to criticize renditions. While the demonstration received front page coverage in the English press, most of the Arabic papers carried a teaser photo on the front page with more detailed reporting in other sections.

¶2. (U) The Ministry of Interior (MOI) responded swiftly to the call for the protest and worked closely with post on arrangements to secure the embassy and allow the protest to proceed.

¶3. (C/NF) Comment: Public protests in Kuwait are still somewhat of a novelty and this demonstration, while well organized and largely peaceful, was unique due to the pro-Hizballah rhetoric and burning of American flags. The protest, combined with recent pro-Hizballah statements by Iran-leaning MPs Ahmad Lari (who was Safar's campaign manager) and Adnan Abdul Samad, are indicative of Iranian efforts to exert greater influence on Kuwait's minority Shi'a population. Indeed, the timely and substantial MOI response was as much an effort to monitor Shi'a groups and Iran sympathizers as to protect USG facilities which in this case, were not in danger.

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